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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 8/11/96  
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CONFIDENCE A BIT BETTER

Consumer confidence advanced this week for the first time since it peaked in early July, lifted by better ratings of the economy and family finances alike.

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index regained -11 on its scale of +100 to -100, up from -13 last week. The index reached a nearly seven-year high of -7 on July 7, but had been losing ground since.

Confidence remains below its pre-recession average, -9 in the second half of the 1980s, but only slightly. And it's far better than it was in the early 1990s, when the recession and its hangover kept consumers glum. In fact so far this is the index's best year since 1989.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-11
July 7	-7
1996 average	-13
1995	-15
1994	-19
1993	-37
1992	-44
1991	-37
1990	-24
1989	-11

Since mid-'90	-29
1990-93	-39
1986-90	-9

These measurements have political implications. At this time in 1992 the index was -43 and George Bush was getting the blame. Today it's -13, and Bill Clinton is getting at least some of the credit. Here's how ABC reported the economy's impact on vote choices in a political briefing paper last week:

ECONOMY - The main difference between now and 1992 is the economy. Then, though the recession was officially over, many Americans still felt its sting - and took it out on Bush. In the 1992 exit poll, only 24 percent of voters said they were better off than in 1988, and a crushing 64 percent disapproved of Bush's economic performance.

Today, 47 percent say they're better off now than they were when Clinton took office, and 56 percent approve of his work on the economy - the second highest of his presidency.

	8/96	1992
Better off than four years ago	47	24
Approve of president's handling of the economy	56	35

Economic satisfaction cuts powerfully to vote choices: Among Americans who say they're better off now, 62 percent support Clinton over Dole. Among those who are worse off, support for Clinton drops to 47 percent.

	Support:*	
	Clinton	Dole
Better off (47%)	62	35
Worse off (29%)	47	44
Same (23%)	50	44

\*8/6/96 data

INDICES - The ABC/Money index is based on ratings of personal finances, the national economy and the buying climate. In the only positive gauge, 57 percent say their finances are in good shape, up two points this week.

As usual, the other gauges are much more negative - and they seem to be pulling in opposite directions: Sixty percent rate the national economy negatively, down two points and the least since April 14. But 64 percent call it a bad time to buy things - up a point to the most since May 19. That could be an early warning of inflation fears.

In any case, these numbers are much better than they've been lately, especially in the early '90s.

	Today	1990-93	1986-90
Negative on national economy	60	85	59
Negative on buying climate	64	74	61
Positive on personal finances	57	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is -1 among men but -21 among women; +21 in higher-income households but -52 in the lowest; -7 among whites but -37 among blacks; and +3 among people who have attended college but -36 among high school dropouts.

Here's a closer look at the three components of the ABC/Money index:

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Sixty percent rate the economy negatively, down two points from last week. It's averaged 64 percent this year, compared to 85 percent from 1990-93 and 59 percent from 1986-1990. The worst, 93 percent, was in late 1991 and early 1992; the best, 50-50, was April 27, 1986. The average for the life of the index is 69 percent negative.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Fifty-seven percent rate their finances positively, up two one points. It's averaged 57 percent this year, compared to 49 percent in the 1990-93 slump and 57 percent before the recession. The worst was 58 percent negative March 14, 1993; the best, 62 percent positive Dec. 20, 1987. The full average is 54 percent positive.

BUYING CLIMATE - Sixty-four percent call this a bad time to buy things, up a point. It's averaged 63 percent this year, compared to 74 percent during the 1990-93 slump and 61 percent before the recession. The worst is 80 percent negative Nov. 2 and Oct. 28, 1990; the best, 52 percent positive May 11, 1986.



18 - 34	-17	-23	-9	-12	-13	-3	-23	-12
35 - 44	-4	-4	-4	-10	-14	4	-23	-12
45 - 54	-8	-11	-20	-13	-19	-7	-36	-16
55 - 64	-12	-12	-17	-9	-17	-2	-40	-15
65 +	-12	-3	1	-18	-17	9	-34	-16
Income:								
Under \$15K	-52	-51	-49	-43	-46	-41	-61	-51
\$15K To \$24.9K	-31	-35	-40	-36	-36	-12	-48	-34
\$25K To \$39.9K	-15	-18	-2	-13	-24	-2	-26	-14
\$40K To \$49.9K	9	6	11	-2	6	21	-31	0
Over \$50K	21	25	28	24	20	32	12	23
Region:								
Northeast	-21	-22	-11	-19	-13	-11	-34	-20
Midwest	6	3	-7	-8	-9	11	-21	-5
South	-11	-11	-13	-9	-23	-5	-24	-15
West	-21	-23	-1	-17	-18	6	-23	-13
Race:								
White	-7	-9	-6	-9	-12	-2	-15	-9
Black	-37	-41	-34	-32	-43	-23	-56	-40
Politics:								
Republican	-3	1	6	1	-5	11	-8	1
Democrat	-8	-14	-13	-11	-23	-6	-28	-18
Independent	-16	-18	-16	-20	-20	-10	-26	-18
Education:								
< High School	-36	-36	-36	-36	-44	-34	-51	-41
High Sch. Grad.	-18	-22	-22	-21	-28	-10	-30	-22
College +	3	2	10	4	1	11	-6	3
Home:								
Own	-4	-6	-4	-4	-11	1	-15	-8
Rent	-30	-31	-23	-30	-29	-19	-37	-29
Marital Status:								
Single	-16	-26	-16	-16	-12	-1	-26	-12
Married	-6	-5	-3	-7	-11	-1	-18	-8
Sep/Wid/Div	-25	-27	-19	-31	-41	-18	-45	-34
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-3	-5	2	-1	-7	7	-14	-4
Part-Time	-22	-22	-21	-11	-29	-4	-35	-18
Not Employed	-20	-21	-18	-28	-27	-16	-34	-26